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MUNICIPAL WAR WORK

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MUNICIPAL WAR WORK

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The gigantic task in which America now finds herself engaged is demanding of every individual, organization and governmental unit two things. The first is service, loyal, unstinted, intelligent, efficient. The other is team-work. It is not enough to realize that every resource of property and energy must be put unhesitatingly at the nation's disposal. We must paraphrase Milton's famous line to read "He also serves who keeps from getting in the way," and stand willing to cooperate to the point of individual self-effacement, to coordinate our activities so that friction is avoided, useless duplication of effort is spared, leakage and waste and inefficiency are stopped.

This, then, is the two-fold task of the American municipality in war work—to render cheerfully its utmost service; and to render it in intelligent cooperation with all the other agencies, great and small, which are putting forth their own loyal efforts to the same great end. It is these two aspects of municipal war service which will mark out the two main divisions of this paper.

I. TYPES OF MUNICIPAL WAR WORK

In the first place, then, what can the American city do to help win the war? Perhaps this question may be most easily answered by stating briefly what the American city has thus far done. Naturally, needs, opportunities and facilities for war service differ widely. They will vary with the size, location, racial problems and industrial conditions of the municipality. The city of 30,000 need not strive to duplicate the war activities of the metropolitan district of New York any more than it should content itself with emulating those of the country village. The following analysis, however, makes an effort to place on exhibition the more important styles and sizes of municipal war work, with the idea that the individual town or city may select those best suited to its own peculiar problems and conditions. These activities may be placed

roughly in ten groups, each one of which warrants some little comment.

1. *Coordination of Societies and Organizations*

First, there is the task of coordinating the patriotic work of societies and organizations. All kinds of private groups, clubs and associations, social, professional, political, religious, philanthropic and propagandist, are endeavoring to contribute in some degree to the successful prosecution of the war. Sometimes they are trying to do the same thing when there should be a division of labor; sometimes they are attempting different things when their energies and resources should be pooled; sometimes they are seeking to accomplish the same end by a variety of different means. Many municipalities have successfully arranged for a central agency, a local committee or council of defense, in which these agencies may be directly or indirectly represented, and through which their efforts may be coordinated so that the multiplication of overhead expense, the duplication of machinery and the wasting of effort may be largely eliminated. The energies of all the private agencies can thus be marshaled solidly behind a community effort, such as the promotion of the liberty loan, in which concerted action is necessary, while at other times each one can be assigned the particular kind of work which it is best fitted to do. One of the serious problems produced by the war has arisen from the repeated, competing, multifarious and sometimes ill-advised campaigns undertaken in so many cities by self-authorized persons or groups for the raising of money. One or two states have felt obliged to deal rather drastically with this problem, and passed legislation making it illegal to solicit war funds of any nature without first securing a permit from the state council of defense. It is believed that such stringent action would be unnecessary if in cities as well as in counties and states the patriotic activities of societies and organizations were coordinated by the creation of some central agency which could act as a sort of clearing house and directing force.

2. *Publicity and Education*

In the second place municipalities can make themselves most

efficient agencies of publicity and education on matters relating to the war and its problems. Its work in this direction may be either direct in indirect. To begin with, the city may, of course, pay for such advertising facilities as are necessary for its work and which it cannot secure free of charge. But many existing agencies and instrumentalities may be turned to account for this purpose without greater expense. Streets and public places may be utilized for purpose of display, parade or demonstration, public buildings may be used for mass meetings, the schools may be utilized as a means of reaching parents as well as children. Churches, clubs, theaters and newspapers are usually willing to cooperate in providing effective means of publicity, if the city will call upon such agencies and tell them what to do. It is unnecessary to discuss or even fully to enumerate the kinds of propaganda which the city might well further through the various means just mentioned. Whether it be helping Uncle Sam to recruit men for the army or navy, or persuading its citizens to buy a bond, or raise potatoes, or cut the loaf at the table, the municipality may render exceedingly valuable service to the nation by acting upon the principle that it pays to advertise.

3. *The Mobilization of Municipal Property and Labor*

In the third place, the city may place at the disposal of the national interest such municipal property and such time and energy of municipal officers or employees as may be so utilized without prejudice to the work and welfare of the city. Cities have only begun to realize, for example, how useful the public schools may be made for war service. As agencies of publicity they have already been mentioned. Municipalities here and there have found that school buildings are conveniently located and well equipped for meeting places after school hours, for various patriotic gatherings, that they can be effectively utilized for headquarters for registration or draft, for administering relief, for assembling and dispatching war material or for the conducting of work among aliens. School gymnasiums, playgrounds and parks have been put at the disposal of organizations, official or private, who have wished facilities for military instruction and drill. Other public

buildings have been made available in like manner. Vacant land owned by the city has been thrown open for the cultivation of war gardens. Not only have buildings and property been enlisted in war service, but the municipality has in some instances set its officers and employees at work to the same end. With careful planning several kinds of work may be turned over to the police department without perceptibly interfering with the efficiency of that organization. The officer on the beat is frequently in a position to secure information, make inquiries and investigate conditions much more easily than any one else. The invaluable service rendered by the police of New York City during the hard times of three years ago in helping to cope with the problem of unemployment is illustrative of what may be done along this line. There is no reason why the police officer in these war times should not secure data regarding unemployment, destitution, location of aliens and many other matters about which the municipality ought to keep itself informed. In short, if our cities were to make a careful inventory of their present resources and use their imaginations and ingenuity, they would be astonished at the extent of the war service they could render with very little expense merely by this effective mobilization of their property and the spare time of their public servants.

4. *Employment and the Labor Supply*

A fourth form of war service open to the municipality relates to labor and employment. If there ever was a time in the history of the country when there was no excuse for idleness, now is that time. And yet the problem of bringing together the man who can do the work and the job that needs to be done is not an easy one. One of the most common forms of municipal, county and state war activity has been that of trying to solve this problem of the distribution of labor. A free employment agency constantly endeavoring to keep in touch with men available for work in war industries or on the farms renders invaluable service when cooperating with those state or national agencies which are attempting to place most advantageously every available unit of labor. Such an employment bureau or labor exchange can also keep a

register of the persons who are willing to volunteer for various forms of war service and act as a medium between them and those who can effectively direct their patriotic efforts.

5. *Relief—Charities—Health*

In the fifth place, an important work can be done by our cities in the dispensing of needed relief, the administration of charity and the safeguarding of public health. First of all, the families of the men who are in the army and navy will frequently need at least temporary assistance until the national government can apply a permanent policy for their relief. Even more frequently will they need comfort and advice and guidance. Surely the city can do no more useful work and discharge no higher obligation than in rendering such aid as it can to these people. Many of the problems incident to the ordinary administration of public charity become more complex and acute under the stress of war and will call for special exertions and high efficiency on the part of the city. And, finally, at a time when the staying power of the nation is more than ever before dependent upon the physical vigor of its citizens and at a time when many of the common restraints and precautions are in danger of being forgotten, the municipality must put forth unusual efforts to see that existing health regulations are rigidly enforced and new measures taken to meet emergencies which may arise.

6. *Work among Aliens*

A sixth and most important type of war service may be rendered by many cities in dealing with aliens and the problems which their presence in our midst creates. The acuteness and complexity of this problem will vary greatly from place to place. In cities where aliens are numerous at least three forms of work may well be undertaken under the direction of the municipal authorities. First, we note certain protective measures which may be taken to forestall or check depredations or injurious propaganda carried on by enemy aliens. Of course, the national government is the authority which must deal with the cases of treason, espionage and sedition. The city may render valuable aid, however, by securing through its police or other agencies as accurate infor-

mation as possible, relating to the presence of enemy aliens or the existence of suspicious circumstances. Should it seem desirable to require a nation-wide or state-wide registration of aliens the cities would naturally undertake the task of doing that work or helping with it within their own limits.

Secondly, either directly or by coordinating the work of other agencies, the city may help along the Americanization of aliens. Suggestions, information, advice and encouragement are frequently needed by the foreigner who wishes to become naturalized. With the enormous increase in the number of applicants for citizenship, the need has also increased for agencies which will help the alien through the complexities of the naturalization process, and many municipalities whose foreign-born population is large, have rendered efficient service in this direction.

Thirdly, some cities have established bureaus for the purpose of bringing about among the foreign-born—be they naturalized or not—a greater feeling of loyalty for the government and of giving them an opportunity to air their grievances and understand more fully why sacrifices and burdens are required of them. It has been true, in many cases, that the most absurd and erroneous ideas regarding conscription have prevailed among relatives of drafted men of foreign birth many of whom do not understand English. These ridiculous impressions turn the potential patriot into the bitterest malcontent. To the shame of some communities, peaceful and law-abiding German or Austrian citizens have been subjected to wholly unwarranted abuse and discrimination by persons to whom all Germans look alike; and these bureaus have been able to adjust many such difficulties and preserve the loyalty of the man who is trying his best to adjust himself to the bitter fact of war between the country of his birth and the country of his adoption. The problem of the alien in time of war has vexed the nations of Europe and is vexing us. It must be met with firmness, justice and tact. A municipality may do much in a broadminded and sensible way to keep that problem from becoming acute within its limits.

7. *Food Production and Conservation*

In the seventh place, no more valuable work has been done by American municipalities than that designed to promote the production of food and its conservation. In the spring of this year, at the suggestion of Mr. Hoover and others, a very large number of our cities threw themselves wholeheartedly into the campaign for war garden and vacant lot cultivation. The ways in which municipalities aided in this work were multifarious indeed. It has already been mentioned that unused land owned by the city was thrown open to cultivation. In other cases the city either rented vacant land for gardens, or lent its support to secure the donation of the use of such lands. Some cities hired tractors to plow and harrow free of cost the lands which could not otherwise be made ready for planting, and in a few instances workhouse labor was employed for the purpose. Seeds were supplied at cost or even less, and water was sometimes supplied at half price for garden use. All the agencies of publicity at the city's disposal were put into play not only to persuade people to raise vegetables who had never done so before, but to put at their disposal expert advice, demonstration and assistance to enable them to carry out their good intentions. It is unnecesary to go further into detail regarding a matter so familiar to us all. It is enough to say that, largely due to the aid rendered directly or indirectly by the cities, the national food supply for 1917 was substantially increased, while the tired business man or laborer found in hoeing beans and potatoes his favorite outdoor sport. Similar efforts were made to aid the national movement for food conservation. Through the schools and other agencies municipalities helped the food administration by urging upon housekeepers the desirability of preserving and canning perishable products, and of conserving the supplies needed to feed the armies in the field.

8. *Distribution and Marketing of Food*

The problem of food production and conservation suggests the related work which forms the eighth type of municipal war activity, namely, the work of helping in the marketing and distri-

bution of food. This is a problem which we have not solved and to which the energies and ingenuity of city, state and nation will have to be applied. Some of the municipal efforts to cope with it are, however, worthy of mention. Some cities substantially increased their marketing facilities by putting at the disposal of farmers and producers municipal property, under adequate regulation, for market purposes. In this way the producer and consumer were brought closer together to their mutual benefit. A few cities have adopted plans contemplating the establishment of what have been called "glut" markets, in which consumers who desire to purchase produce in large quantities for preserving or canning may do so at wholesale rates. It seems clear that in the future the American city is going to be called upon to face more directly and intelligently the problem of the distribution of the food supply.

9. *Transportation Facilities*

A ninth form of war service which municipalities may render relates to the means of transportation. This is a problem which, of course, concerns more those cities or towns which are under the necessity of providing facilities for handling troops or war supplies. But there is no municipality which can afford to practice the false economy which would permit streets or roads or other transportation facilities to deteriorate. The avenues of traffic throughout the country should be kept efficient. Municipalities which, by reason of their location, become the centers for mobilization of troops or war supplies have taken more constructive measures to provide means of transportation. Registers have been made up of the owners of automobiles and other vehicles which could, in time of emergency, be placed at the service of the military department. Automobile squadrons have, in some cases, been organized out of those who are willing to serve in this way. There are many things which cities may do to aid in the prompt and efficient movement of soldiers and supplies.

10. *Home Defense and Law Enforcement*

It remains to consider the efforts made by many cities to secure adequate home defense and effective law enforce-

ment. Once more the individual city will find its activities determined by its size, location, racial characteristics and other considerations. Ever since the dawn of history when armies have gone forth to war the duty of protecting the forsaken walls and firesides has devolved upon those who, by reason of age or other disabilities, were not called into the active service in the ranks. Many American municipalities are facing just that problem. The result has been the organization in many places of home guards made up of men who are not liable to federal service. These home guards are organized and drilled at such times as render unnecessary their withdrawal from their customary occupations. They are a sort of emergency police force or posse comitatus, available for the suppression of riots, disturbances or insurrections, and the guarding of strategic points such as bridges, tunnels, water supplies or cargoes of munitions or food. In some instances, as in New York and other metropolitan centers, they have been made adjuncts of the police force; but in other cases, their organization has been independent. Another measure for home defense has been the mobilizing and training of the police and fire departments for distinct war service. This has been done in several ways. By the organizing of police and fire reserves composed either of those not in active service who have had experience or of men who are applicants for positions in those departments, the effectiveness of the police and fire protection work has been well nigh doubled in some cases. The work of the two departments has been coordinated. The fire department has been trained to render "riot service" on the belief that a powerful stream of water is frequently as efficacious in dispersing an irresponsible mob as is the machine gun, and does the work with less danger to human life. The prevalence of incendiary fires has led a few municipalities to give the power to arrest to firemen so that suspicious characters at the scene of conflagration may be apprehended with the least possible delay. Stricter ordinances have been passed to control the possession and use of explosives; contractors, for example, being compelled to keep their stores of dynamite at night under the protection of armed guards.

A vigorous, steady and just enforcement of the law is a great preventive of crime and disorder. It is needed now as never before. Cooperation with the federal authorities for the discovery and suppression of sedition, treason and sabotage is the duty of every municipality. Throughout the country and especially near the military encampments every available means should be employed for the stamping out of the evils of vice and intoxication. No efforts made by the national government for the control of the moral conditions surrounding the army posts can be so effective as to render unnecessary all the help which the administrations of nearby municipalities can render. In short, in all these matters, no matter what the state or nation may attempt to do, on the city itself must rest a very large measure of responsibility for adequate home defense and protection, effective law enforcement and vice control.

Before leaving our discussion of the kinds of war work which municipalities have in the past, or may in the future undertake, it may be well to suggest that now, if never before, the American city must realize the necessity of subjecting every enterprise and activity to the most rigid tests of efficiency and economy. This is no time for slipshod work, partisan patronage, careless accounting and extravagance. In the city, as everywhere, retrenchment is the slogan. Waste is no longer merely foolish—it has become criminal. This does not mean that there must be a sharp reduction in the expenditures for necessary public work and the ordinary municipal undertakings. Municipal economy is sometimes to be judged perhaps not so much by the purposes for which the public funds are spent as by the value received for that expenditure. One of the luxuries which the American municipality must forego, as a war measure, if for no other reason, is the luxury of paying its officers, its laborers, its contractors, the firm from which it purchases supplies, more than it receives in services or goods.

II. COOPERATION IN MUNICIPAL WAR WORK

The kinds of work which municipalities have found it possible to do to help win the war have been discussed, perhaps at too

great length. It remains to consider briefly the methods by which municipal war work may be coordinated with that of county, state or nation. What demands are made upon the city in the way of cooperation?

There are two phases to this problem of cooperation. There is first the problem of cooperative organization and there is second the problem of division of labor.

1. *Cooperative Organization*

In the first place, then, how should municipal war work be organized and how should that organization be connected with the county, state, or national councils of defense?

There is no hard and fast form of organization. The usual plan has been to appoint a council, nonpolitical in character, composed of men who enjoy the public confidence and who will give their services in an advisory capacity. Certain city officials may be members ex officiis of that body, and frequently the problem of coordinating the war activities of private clubs or associations has been solved by making the heads of such organizations members of the municipal council of defense. This central council will serve as a general advisory and directing agency for the purpose of outlining and coordinating the work of the committees which it organizes to take charge of the special kinds of work in which it seems desirable to engage. It is assumed that all of the persons appointed to the municipal council of defense or its committees will serve without compensation. The city itself will probably pay the necessary expenses, although in some cases private generosity may make even this unnecessary. This scheme of organization is susceptible of many modifications and may be made as complex or as simple as local problems render desirable.

Assuming that the city has a satisfactory board or council organized which may direct its war activities, the manner in which it can bring itself into working relations with the forces of the state and nation will depend largely upon the way in which the state is organized for war service. Practically every state in the Union has organized a state council of defense to cooperate with the National Council of Defense.

The relationship between the municipal defense councils and the state councils of defense is in general of two distinct types. First there are states in which there is direct connection between the state council and that of the city, without the aid of any intermediate agency. Second, there are states in which the local unit for war work is the county, and the municipality is regarded as an administrative subdivision of the county.

Turning first to those states in which the cities cooperate directly with the state councils of defense we find considerable variation as to the scheme of organization. In the first place there are states in which the state council has been made large enough to include among its members, either active or advisory, the mayors of all the important towns and cities. In these cases, the mayors serving on the state council have naturally been able to direct more wisely the activities in their own cities. In the second place the direct cooperation of municipalities with the state council has been asked and received even when the county or township was the regular local unit for war work. In Iowa and New York, at least, direct appeals for assistance have been made to the mayors of cities. In Louisiana and Iowa the president of the municipal league of the state is a member of the state council of defense and, though in neither case does he hold that office ex officio, an additional channel of communication is thus opened up between the state and municipality. In the third place, there is the quite unique type of organization of war service in New Jersey. In that state all war activities are placed under the control of the adjutant general's office with which is associated a committee of public safety, composed exclusively of the mayors of the state and working through a small executive committee. While many states have councils of defense in which the officers of important cities have places, this seems to be the only instance in which the state council is composed only of city officials and on which no other subdivisions, interests and organizations are given representation.

Much more numerous, however, than these instances of direct cooperation between city and state are the cases where the county or township is made the unit for local war service. This county

form of organization has very generally commended itself to state defense authorities because it covers the entire geographical area of the state and brings both urban and rural districts alike into touch with the central agency.

The relation between the municipality and these county councils of defense differs from state to state. In a few cases the city organization will supersede that of the county. In New York City, for example, the mayor's committee on national defense controls the war activities of the five counties comprising Greater New York. In other cases where cities are important but do not swallow up the county they are given ample representation on the county councils of defense and may even dominate its policy though they do not exercise independent power. In many of the primarily rural middle western counties, however, the county council will itself control the war work for that district through the agencies of committees in towns or villages or in some cases by its own direct action. In the state of Texas the existence of the city is being ignored and a plan is on foot to organize, under the direction of the county councils of defense, subcommittees in every voting precinct in the county.

The foregoing analysis indicates how many possibilities there are in the way of organizing the war work of a state and giving the municipality a place in that general program of patriotic endeavor. Thus far the Illinois state council of defense seems not to have adopted any definite scheme of local organization. Should it decide to do so the probabilities are that the county would be made the local unit as such a plan would seem to be necessary to reach effectively all the districts in a state so largely rural. But it is hardly conceivable that any plan of organizing the war resources of the state would fail to avail itself of the services of such effective councils of defense as might be operating in the towns and cities of the state. Whether Illinois municipalities are asked to coordinate their patriotic efforts with those of a county organization or a state organization is a matter of small importance so long as they work loyally and cooperate intelligently and wholeheartedly.

2. *Division of Labor*

It has already been noted that while cooperation in war work demands efficient organization to that end, it also calls for division of labor between the cooperating agencies. Viewed from this standpoint of effective division of labor, the kinds of war service which municipalities may from time to time consider undertaking will fall into three distinct categories. First, there is work which the city alone should undertake or which it can effectively do independently. Second, there are tasks which the city must do in conjunction with the county or state organizations. And third, there are things which the city should not undertake at all but leave to the state or nation.

The war work which the city can most effectively do alone is that, of course, which relates to its own local problems or conditions, the assumption of its own unique responsibilities and obligations. By far the largest part of the service, however, which the municipality can render will fall in the second class of undertakings, in the doing of which it must work in effective cooperation with other agencies doing that task, or part of a task, in which it can best serve the great common end. Finally, there are a few sorts of municipal war work, entered upon with the best intentions and the highest motives which are rather generally admitted to be ill-advised. The Council of National Defense has urgently requested local defense organizations to postpone the adoption of any comprehensive plans for the permanent relief of soldiers or their dependents until the policy of the national government in regard to that matter shall have been worked out. The commandeering of supplies of food and coal and the fixing of prices should be done in accord with policies formulated to meet national or state rather than municipal conditions; and there have been some recent cases in which well-meaning mayors and sheriffs have found themselves within the grip of the federal law because of their unauthorized seizure of supplies intended by the national authorities for other places and purposes. Finally, one cannot too severely condemn the occasional acts of a few municipalities whose authorities in their misguided zeal have sought to serve their

country by taking the law into their own hands. The brand of patriotism which confiscates land or the use of land for war gardens without paying for it, compels a man to buy a liberty bond under threat of bodily harm or imprisonment, or in any other way violates the constitutional rights of the law-abiding citizen, even though his patriotic ardor be somewhat cooler than it ought to be, that brand of patriotism closely resembles the brand of justice dealt out by the mob in accordance with the uncivilized code of lynch-law. No municipality can afford so seriously to injure the great cause which it is trying to serve.

Before embarking upon any form of patriotic endeavor, then, it is incumbent upon every city to judge carefully, in the light of such advice as it can secure from county, state, or nation, in which of these three classes just mentioned that enterprise will fall. Thus and thus only may it perform effectively its own peculiar duties, determine the things it may most efficiently do in cooperation with other agencies, and learn what it had best let alone. And all this to the end that its service may count for the very most in the winning of this great war.

It seems to me that this is not a problem in which this organization can afford to take merely a casual or purely academic interest. It is true that the Illinois Municipal League is not a body which can directly engage in war work with any real effectiveness. But it does not follow that there is nothing of value which it can do. I submit to you that there are two distinct things which this organization might consider undertaking.

It might, in the first place, provide for or sponsor the making of a careful investigation of just what has been done by the towns and cities of Illinois in the way of effective war service, and what the possibilities in that direction are which have not been adequately developed. A report embodying these facts, coupled perhaps with such recommendations as a committee of the league might care to make would be of inestimable value to the municipalities of this state by letting them know what their neighbors are doing and how they are doing it.

In the second place, it seems to me that such an organiza-

tion as this might well have a committee on municipal war work which could put itself in touch with the state council of defense, suggesting its willingness to coordinate with that body in any effective way in which its services could be utilized. The chairman of the state council of defense states that no data has been collected regarding the war work of Illinois cities nor have any plans been matured for the coordination of those activities. He declares that the state council would gladly welcome any suggestions which the Illinois Municipal League might make relating to those problems with the assurance that they would be of value and would receive careful consideration.

It seems to me that in these two ways the Illinois Municipal League might render definite service to the cities of this state and to the state itself. It would at least make clear its willingness to further the great cause of the war by helping, however slightly, to mobilize the resources of our municipalities for the effective service to the nation.

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